

JJ GREY & MOFRO GEORGIA WARHORSE

"Inspired, deliriously funky, deep-in-the-pocket front porch soul." —*Chicago Sun-Times*

"JJ Grey concocts a vivid blend of blues, Southern rock and funk, complete with richly evocative lyrics and an easygoing sense of blue-collar storytelling...lucid, plainspoken American music."
—*National Public Radio*

"Intoxicating North Florida blues-rock, with hints of Memphis, Muscle Shoals and garage-band music."
—*USA Today*

Singing with a passion and fervor directly influenced by the classic soul heroes, JJ Grey has written and recorded five albums of original songs steeped in the rhythm & blues, rock and country soul of his native backwoods home outside Jacksonville, Florida. Grey comes from a long tradition of Southern storytellers and, in that spirit, he fills his songs with details that are at once vivid, personal and universal. After a decade of hard touring, he still spends eight months of the year on the road, bringing his music to a loyal, ever-growing, worldwide fanbase.

In a live performance review in *The New York Times*, writer Nate Chinen praised JJ's "balance of wildness and cool" describing his music as "Southern swamp rock with undercurrents of Memphis soul. His songs chronicle ambiguous truths and unambiguous urges," delivered by Grey's "winningly uncontrived vocals." Likewise, *Billboard* has praised Grey's "world-beating blend of Southern rock, blues and Florida swamp soul."

2010 sees the Alligator Records release of Grey's latest labor of love, *Georgia Warhorse*, named after the resilient Southern lubber grasshopper. "Yellow and black, and tough like an old-school Tonka toy," says JJ. "They seem so at ease with the world. Nothing seems to rile them. They're in no hurry, but they have a kind of resilience because they just keep coming back, and I've always felt there was a lesson in there for me to learn." Grey could be described in such words; his own career has grown over the course of a decade of winning over fans night after night.

As with the previous releases, Grey meticulously demoed the entire *Georgia Warhorse* album himself, playing all the various instruments in his own home studio he calls the Egg Room. "It's named after the old refrigerator room we used to keep eggs in when my grandparents were in the egg business," says Grey. "Once I'm done with the demos, then I start thinking about hitting the real studio." Armed with eleven new original songs, including one co-written with songwriting icons Chuck Prophet and Angelo Petraglia (Kings of Leon), Grey and long-time friend and producer Dan Prothero hit the "real" studio, Jim Devito's Retrophonics in St. Augustine, Florida, to begin tracking *Georgia Warhorse*. There, Grey would again track the majority of the instruments himself, playing guitars, keys, harmonica and delivering

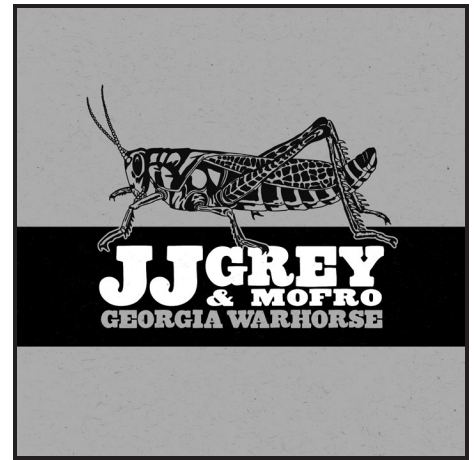
all the vocals in his gritty, straight-from-the-soul voice. Prothero's approach as producer and Retrophonics' unvarnished, natural sound mirror Grey's vision of musical tones and his love of the rustic Florida backwoods, where his family has lived for generations.

Joining him for a track on this album is Grey's long-time musical hero and reggae icon Toots Hibbert, who sings with Grey on the *The Sweetest Thing*. "Toots is the greatest soul singer I've ever heard and one of my biggest influences," says Grey. *Georgia Warhorse* also provided the opportunity for Grey to work with another friend and hero, fellow Jacksonvillian Derek Trucks. In true neighborly fashion, Trucks stopped by JJ's house to record slide guitar for the song *Lullaby*. "Derek Trucks is the best guitarist I've ever seen and I'm honored to have Derek and Toots on my record," says Grey.

Debuting in 2001 with the CD *Blackwater*, following up in 2004 with *Lochloosa*, Grey steadily built his following one live performance at a time. Both albums (reissued by Alligator in 2007) were released under the name Mofro, a name the young Grey chose to describe his music and sound while still working his day job at a lumberyard. He has since used the word to name his band of ever-changing, world-class players. The albums were met with critical acclaim, including "one of the 10 best R&B records of the year and one of the best of the decade" at Amazon.com for *Blackwater* and "one of the 10 best releases of the year" in *Rolling Stone* for *Lochloosa*.

In 2007, with his first Alligator release, *Country Ghetto*, Grey reached an even larger audience, doubling both his album sales and his concert attendance. *Relix* said, "*Country Ghetto* is a tribute to JJ Grey's rich comprehension of the South's learned musical roots and knack to make age-old ideas sound fresh. Grey and Mofro fuse rock with plenty of soul, groove-heavy blues, and dirty, infectious funk. The deep and introspective lyrics are a breath of fresh air." 2008's *Orange Blossoms* built on that energy, with even more fans, radio stations and critics coming on board. A 2009 best-of vinyl LP, *The Choice Cuts*, has kept the momentum going.

Grey, an avid outdoorsman, is a dedicated fisherman and surfer and holds an honorary position on the board of the Snook Foundation, dedicated to the



protection of coastal fish and fish habitat. He has written passionately and articulately about his love for the untrammelled environment of his north Florida home.

JJ has brought his music to countless festivals, including the Austin City Limits Festival, Byron Bay Blues Festival (Australia), Bonnaroo, Montreal Jazz Festival and Fuji Rock (Japan). Over the course of his 15-plus year career, Grey has shared stages with the likes of B.B. King, The Allman Brothers Band, The Black Crowes, Los Lobos, Jeff Beck, Ben Harper, Lenny Kravitz, Mavis Staples, Booker T. Jones and many others. In the spring of 2010, Grey was awarded the opportunity of a lifetime as a solo acoustic opener with soul legends Staples and Jones on the *What It Is!* tour. JJ says, "Getting to open up for such legends, it's just something I'll never forget."

His songs have also appeared in film and on network and cable television programs including *House*, *Flashpoint*, *Crash*, *Friday Night Lights*, *The Deadliest Catch*, and the film *The Hoot*. In November 2009, JJ wrote his first film score, for the critically acclaimed documentary *The Good Soldier*, that appeared in theatres and on *Bill Moyers Journal* on PBS. Recently, Grey played piano, sang and contributed a song (*The Wrong Side*) to Buckwheat Zydeco's Grammy-winning Alligator album, *Lay Your Burden Down*.

With the release of *Georgia Warhorse* and a relentless world tour to follow, Grey is set for a breakout year. Commenting on his musical future, he says, "Life just makes itself up right in front of me and I just roll with it. All I know is to have the family I have, see the places I've been, meet the people I've met and to get to play music with some of the most talented folks around has got to make me the luckiest man alive."

DISCOGRAPHY:

- 2001 *Blackwater* (Fog City, reissued by Alligator in 2007)
- 2004 *Lochloosa* (Fog City, reissued by Alligator in 2007)
- 2007 *Country Ghetto* (Alligator)
- 2008 *Orange Blossoms* (Alligator)
- 2009 *The Choice Cuts* (Alligator, vinyl-only best of)
- 2010 *Georgia Warhorse* (Alligator)



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